Youth

Updated November 2011

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines youth as persons between the ages of 13 and 24. Due to biological changes and social pressures during this age, youth may engage in high risk behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use and unprotected sex, which enhance the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV transmission (CDC, 2008). These behaviors established during adolescence are often extended through adulthood (CDC, 2009).

The national HIV incidence estimates* from CDC show that between 2006 and 2009, the number of new HIV infections among persons between the ages of 13 and 29 increased by 21%. Within this population in 2009, men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for 69% of new HIV incidence; furthermore, this age group is the only MSM sub-group to have a statistically significant increase in the number of HIV infections over this four year period (Prejean, 2011).

In addition to HIV, young people are at a higher risk for acquiring sexually transmitted diseases. Adolescents aged 15-24 represent only 25% of the sexually active population, but it is estimated that they are diagnosed with nearly half of all new STDs (CDC, 2010a). Individuals infected with STDs are at least two to five times more likely to acquire HIV than uninfected persons due to increased susceptibility; they are also more likely to transmit the diseases (CDC, 2010b).

Black male youth are 14 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV disease than White male youth.

Black female youth are 16 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV disease than White female youth.

HIV DISEASE DIAGNOSES

From 2005-2009, the annual number of HIV disease diagnoses among the youth population in Virginia ranged from 164 to 237, accounting for on average 20% of total cases per year. Diagnoses among males represented approximately 80% of all youth HIV disease diagnoses.

By Race/Ethnicity

Among youth diagnosed with HIV disease in Virginia during 2005-2009, 14% were White and 7.3% were Hispanic. Black youth represented 76% of new diagnosis despite only accounting for around 24% of the youth population in Virginia.

Number of new HIV infections* among young Blacks between the ages of 13 and 29 increased 32% from 2006 to 2009. Incidence also increased by 12% among young Hispanics and by six percent among Whites during this time frame. The increase in minority youth is largely due to new infections among males (Prejean, 2011).

By Transmission Risk^

The largest percentage (91%) of new HIV disease diagnoses between 2005 and 2009 in male youth was among MSM. Injection drug users (IDU) and MSM with a history of injection drug use (MSM-IDU) each accounted for two percent of new diagnoses among men. The heterosexual contact transmission category represented nearly five percent, and the rest were attributed to other causes. Among females, 93% of new HIV disease diagnoses in this five year period were attributed to heterosexual contact and 6.4% to IDU.

Between 2006 and 2009, the HIV incidence* among young MSM increased by 39%, largely driven by the statistically significant increase of new infections among young Black MSM aged 13 to 29 (48%). Young Hispanic MSM and young White MSM also respectively experienced increases of 29% and 19% in these four years (Prejean, 2011).

HIV/AIDS PREVALENCE

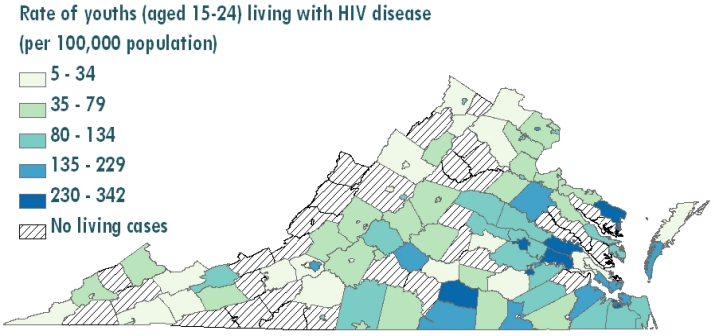
There were 3,857 people who were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS between the ages of 15 and 24 who were still living with the disease in Virginia at the end of 2009, approximately 39% of these individuals had progressed to the AIDS stage of the disease. Almost 70% of all HIV-infected youth in the state were male.

Prevalence Rates†

At the end of 2009, there were an estimated 1,124,459 15-24 year olds living in Virginia, and the HIV/AIDS prevalence among this population was 340 per 100,000 population. The prevalence rates among 15-24 year old males and females were 459 and 212 per 100,000, respectively. In comparison, the prevalence rate of all those living in Virginia with HIV disease at the end of 2009 was 282 per 100,000.

HIV prevalence rates among minorities were also higher than that of White youth. Among those aged 15-24 in Virginia, Blacks were 15 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV disease than their White counterparts; Hispanics are 4 times more likely to be diagnosed compared to Whites.

Prevalence of HIV Disease among Youth, 2009



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*Data presented in the national HIV incidence report are annual estimates of the number of new infections, whether or not they were actually diagnosed. In contrast, Virginia data are based on new diagnoses each year, which can include persons who were infected in previous years. These two sets of data cannot be directly compared; they are presented here only to show similarity in trends.

†All rates are calculated for 15-24 year-olds only due to the lack of population information among the 13-14 age population in Virginia.

^These data are not actual cases; the percentages presented are estimates of the transmission category using the CDC provided multiple imputation procedure for cases reported without an identified or reported risk.